

Neuroinclusive career guidance

10 practical tips from our conversation with Roxanne Steel,
Head of Training and Consultancy at Evenbreak

The following tips are drawn from a CDI interview with Roxanne (Rox) Steel of Evenbreak. They reflect Rox's professional insight and lived experience as a disabled and neurodivergent person, and are shared to spark reflection on your own practice. They are not formal CDI guidance or legal advice - what works for one client may not work for another, so as always, please use these tips in the context of your own professional judgement.

WHY IT MATTERS Many neurodivergent people disengage from guidance before anyone spots a barrier, and many have internalised stories about what isn't for them. How we work can change both.

What gets in the way for candidates?

When Evenbreak asked candidates about their biggest barriers, three came out on top:

Trust	The process	Self-belief
Knowing which employers they can trust	Confidence in recruitment and how they'll be supported	A lack of self-confidence

Rox groups barriers in guidance into four kinds: physical and environmental, information and communication, policies and practices (like how appointments are booked) and attitudinal - both ours and the ones that clients have built up over time.

10 tips to take into your next client session

1

Ask everyone, assume nothing

Don't wait for someone to disclose a need or ask for an adjustment. Many people who would benefit from support may not feel comfortable requesting it, or may worry about how they will be perceived.

Try this: start every session by asking, "What would help you get the most out of today?"

2

Audit your space

Take a fresh look at your environment. Visual clutter, a noisy cafe next door, strong smells, poor lighting or limited seating may affect someone's ability to engage comfortably, alongside physical accessibility considerations.

Try this: sit in your client's chair for five minutes and notice what you see, hear and smell.

3

Offer more than one way to engage

Guidance doesn't have to happen in the same format for everyone. Online, in person, by phone or even a walk outside can suit different people.

Try this: offer a choice of formats when booking, rather than setting a default.

4

Not everyone prefers to communicate verbally

Avoid expecting everyone to respond immediately or express themselves best through conversation. Some people may prefer to contribute before or after a session, in writing or through other formats.

Try this: send questions in advance and invite written reflections or follow-up comments afterwards.

5

Say exactly what you mean

Don't assume everyone shares the same understanding of language, expectations or processes. Clear and explicit communication benefits everyone.

Try this: share a short plan of what the session will cover and why.

6

Silence doesn't always mean everything is working

"Nobody's complained" doesn't mean there's no barrier. Some people disengage rather than raise a concern explicitly.

Try this: make it easy to give feedback and invite it regularly, not just once.

7

Show it, then say it - more than once

Support shouldn't be something people have to discover for themselves. Make available adjustments visible, and mention them at different stages of the process.

Try this: include information about adjustments in booking confirmations, reminders and on your website.

8

Aim for the pins, not the bumpers

The Equality Act is your safety net, not your target. Remove barriers as part of everyday practice and you'll rarely need to rely on the law at all.

Try this: review one process this term (booking, paperwork, follow-up communication) to identify and remove hidden barriers.

9

Think career, not just job

Rox was told "you'll do well in any job" and steered to admin and phones. Disabled people are often underemployed, not just unemployed, and can face barriers to career progression. Support people to explore a wide range of opportunities, including longer-term aspirations and leadership pathways.

Try this: discuss progression opportunities and explore what different working environments might be like in practice.

10

Follow their lead on language

Where possible, use language that reflects the social model of disability, recognising that barriers in society can disable people. At the same time, respect how individuals choose to describe themselves and avoid making assumptions.

Try this: when asking someone to share information about a disability, condition or support need, explain why you're asking and how the information will be used.

THE ANALOGY TO REMEMBER

Think of ten-pin bowling with the bumpers up. The bumpers stop the ball going in the gutter - that's the Equality Act. But nobody bowls at the bumpers. You're aiming for the pins: guidance that works for everyone from the start.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING**Bring more questions than answers.**

Good guidance doesn't mean having every answer ready. Get comfortable with not knowing - and let curiosity lead.

Roxanne Steel's key message for careers advisers

Good to know

Neurodiversity isn't named in the Equality Act 2010, but a neurodivergent person may be protected under the definition of disability, depending on their circumstances. Many people don't identify with the word "disabled" because of historical stigma, so explain what the law and schemes such as Access to Work can offer, without assuming how someone sees themselves.

About Evenbreak

Roxanne Steel is Head of Training and Consultancy at Evenbreak, a specialist jobs board connecting disabled and neurodivergent talent with employers who want to be truly inclusive. Evenbreak also offers training and consultancy to help organisations remove barriers in recruitment and at work.

**FIND OUT MORE****Neurodiversity guide for careers advisers**

Free guide and resource directory. | autism.org.uk

Neurodiversity at work

Acas guidance on support and adjustments. | acas.org.uk

Access to Work

Practical and financial support in work. | gov.uk

Evenbreak

Inclusive jobs board, resources and training. | evenbreak.com